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OFFICE OF CHIEF OF COUNSEL FOR WAR CRIMES

EVIDENCE DIVISION

Date: 19 July 1948

I certify that Document Number D-541 was introduced into evidence as Exhibit Number USA-112 in the Trial by the International Tribunal of Hermann GOERING, et al, which commenced on 20 November 1945, and that the attached photostat is a true and correct copy of the original.

Fred Niebergall

FRED NIEBERGALL
Chief, Document Control Branch

H2373 - 0003

C E R T I F I C A T E

I hereby certify that the annexed document D-541 No. USA - 112 is a photostat of an original document submitted in evidence by the United States Prosecution under this number. The original document has been withdrawn in accordance with Rule 10 of the International Military Tribunal, and to the best of my knowledge and belief is to be held at the National Archives, Washington D.C. .

Nuremberg, 24 June 1948

Paul Joosten

PAUL A. JOOSTEN

General Secretary
International Military
Tribunal

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INTERNATIONAL MILITARY TRIBUNAL

I, DAVID PATRICK MAXWELL FYFE, hereby certify that the document annexed hereto and numbered D-777 is an official British Governmental document,

~~a report of the United Nations,~~

D.P.M.F.

~~an act or document of a committee set up for the investigation~~ of war crimes,

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~~a document made by a person in the employment of the British~~ Government in the ordinary course of his duties, and that such person was in a position and under a duty to make all ~~reasonable investigations relating to the subject matter thereof.~~

D P M F

(signed) D. P. Maxwell Fyfe

(date) 30th November 1945.

(strike out and initial all words not applicable).

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USA Exhib. 112
Filed Dec 5 1945

H2373 – 0005

D 571

Further Correspondence Respecting Czechoslovakia

(10869)

[C 3925/7/12] No. 22.

Mr. Newton to Viscount Halifax.—(Received March 24.)

(No. 129.)

My Lord, *Prague, March 21, 1939.*

I HAVE the honour to inform you of an account which I have just received of the events leading up to the declaration of the independence of Slovakia. Hitherto, to me in Prague at any rate, these events have been shrouded in obscurity. The following report, which has been given to me by a reliable friend with excellent sources of information, shows how involuntary was the declaration of independence, and throws a further lurid light on the gangster methods employed by the Reich to obtain its ends in Czecho-Slovakia.

2. On M. Sidor's return to Bratislava, after he had been entrusted with the Government in place of Mgr. Tiso, Herr Buerckel, Herr Seyss-Inquart and five German generals came at about 10 P.M. on the evening of Saturday, the 11th March, into a Cabinet meeting in progress at Bratislava, and told the Slovak Government that they should proclaim the independence of Slovakia. When M. Sidor showed hesitation, Herr Buerckel took him on one side and explained that Herr Hitler had decided to settle the question of Czecho-Slovakia definitely. Slovakia ought, therefore, to proclaim her independence because Herr Hitler would otherwise disinterest himself in her fate. M. Sidor thanked Herr Buerckel for this information, but said that he must discuss the situation with the Government at Prague.

3. Early on the following Sunday morning Mgr. Tiso requested that a meeting of the Cabinet should be held at 8 A.M. M. Sidor agreed, but said that the meeting must not take place in the building ordinarily used because that was guarded by the German Ordner and was also too close to the bridge across the Danube. The Cabinet accordingly met in his private apartment, when M. Sidor proposed that the Government should move to Trnava, since Bratislava was too much under German control. The chief of police, M. Klinovski (who has since been appointed Slovak Minister at Warsaw), thereupon reported that he could not accept responsibility for this move, as the road to Trnava was guarded by the German Ordner. At the same time news was received that an attempt against M. Sidor was in preparation, so the Cabinet went to hold their meeting in the offices of the newspaper *Slovak*.

4. Mgr. Tiso attended there, and said that he had received a telegram by the hand of Herr Buerckel inviting him to go at once to see the Führer in Berlin. He had to accept this invitation because Herr Buerckel had informed him that otherwise the two German divisions on the other side of the Danube would occupy Bratislava and the Hungarians would be authorised to seize not only Ruthenia, as had already been agreed to by Berlin, but also Eastern Slovakia. Mgr. Tiso explained that he proposed to leave by train early Monday morning and did not, therefore, expect to be back before Tuesday evening. This would have given time for Prague and Warsaw to be consulted, but so soon as Mgr. Tiso arrived in Vienna that day in preparation for an early departure the following morning, he was escorted into an aeroplane and informed that he was to proceed in it to Berlin at once, as Herr Hitler awaited him.

5. While the Cabinet was in session on the following Monday afternoon Mgr. Tiso telephoned to them in German saying that he was speaking in Berlin from the office of the Führer, who was attended also by Herr von Ribbentrop, Baron von Neurath and General Brauchitsch. He had orders to request the Cabinet to summon a meeting of the Slovak Parliament for the following Tuesday morning at 10 A.M. So soon as he was satisfied that his message had been understood he rang off. Mgr. Tiso must have returned by aeroplane during the night, as he arrived back in Bratislava at 4 A.M. on Tuesday morning. He told the Slovak Ministers that he had been received first by Herr von Ribbentrop and then by Herr Hitler. Herr von Ribbentrop had informed him that Herr Hitler was considerably roused because M. Sidor's Government appeared to be co-operating with the Czechs. This was contrary to the intention of the Vienna Award, which had been based on the principle of nationality and therefore of Slovak independence. The Führer, concluded Herr von Ribbentrop, will tell you the rest. Herr Hitler subsequently expressed himself somewhat as follows:—

> "At Munich I did not take Bohemia and Moravia into the German territorial sphere ('Lebensraum'). I left the Czechs only another five months, but for the Slovaks I have some sympathy. I approved the Award of Vienna in the conviction that the Slovaks would separate themselves from the Czechs and declare their independence, which would be under German protection. That is why I have refused Hungarian demands in respect of Slovakia. As the Slovaks appear to be agreeing with the Czechs it looks as though they have not respected the spirit of the Vienna Award. This I cannot tolerate. To-morrow at mid-day I shall begin military action against the Czechs, which will be carried out by General Brauchitsch" (who was present and to whom he pointed). "Germany," he said, "does not intend to take Slovakia into her 'Lebensraum,' and that is why you must either immediately proclaim the independence of Slovakia or I will disinterest myself in her fate. To make your choice I give you until to-morrow mid-day, when the Czechs will be crushed by the German steam-roller."

Herr Hitler then dismissed Mgr. Tiso, saying that he could arrange any other matters with his staff.

6. While Mgr. Tiso was informing the Slovak Cabinet of these communications at about 8 A.M. on the Tuesday morning, the Deputies began to assemble. Meanwhile, it was found that communication with Prague had been interrupted. At the meeting of the Deputies Mgr. Tiso read the text of the law proclaiming the independence of Slovakia, which had been given to him by Herr von Ribbentrop already drafted in Slovak. When the Deputies wanted to discuss the matter the leader of the German minority, Herr Karmasin, warned M. Sidor that the German occupation of Moravska-Ostrava would begin that day at noon, and that he should be careful lest Bratislava suffered similar treatment. The Government thereupon left the decision to the Deputies, who protested in dismay and great distress at this treatment, but finally decided that they had no option but to vote in favour of the declaration of independence.

7. I have sent a copy of this despatch to His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin.

I have, &c.
BASIL NEWTON.

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